



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

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## **Connecticut's Supportive Housing Initiative Gains National Recognition**

***Governor Rell: Supportive housing truly effective  
In preventing and reducing homelessness***

Connecticut's Supportive Housing Pilots Initiative today received the prestigious Innovations in American Government Award from the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Governor M. Jodi Rell today praised the leadership, staff and advocates of the Pilots Initiative for their successful efforts in battling homelessness and winning this national recognition for innovative public service.

"Supportive housing is truly effective in preventing and reducing homelessness, especially for people struggling with serious mental health problems," Governor Rell said. "The initiative combines affordable rental housing with individualized health, support and employment services. These services help address the root causes of homelessness and get people back on the road to recovery and work."

"Connecticut's initiative is working because of the caring, skill and dedication of the people who are developing our system," the Governor said. "I thank these professionals for the terrific job they're doing. We are making a real impact toward breaking the cycle of chronic homelessness."

The award announced today is administered in partnership with the Council for Excellence in Government. There are just seven winners of the award nationally, which comes with a \$100,000 prize to help winning programs disseminate their models to other communities.

Altogether, the Supportive Housing Pilots Initiative will provide up to 650 units of affordable housing and support services. Those units are in addition to 500 new units for which Governor Rell proposed, and the legislature approved, funding last year. Those units are part of a broader supportive housing plan which builds upon the success of the Pilots Initiative.

"Supportive housing has been shown to be a cost-effective solution to chronic homelessness," the Governor's 2006-07 budget recommendation said. "This initiative will create stability for vulnerable populations, decrease their use of acute and expensive health and mental health services and set them on the road to a productive life."

"The State of Connecticut should be commended for its commitment to creating permanent supportive housing as a solution to ending chronic homelessness," said Diane Randall, director of the Hartford-based Partnership for Strong Communities.

On any given day in the Nutmeg state, an estimated 2,800 individuals and families face long-term homelessness, according to the Urban Institute. The supportive housing program reaches out to these families through a caseworker who helps rebuild the foundation under their lives. Beyond getting families and individuals into affordable housing (defined as less than one third of the tenant's income), case workers also help them navigate government social service agencies, enroll their children in public schools, assist with employment readiness and job retention, and even help them furnish their new homes. Since the program targets people who have histories of mental and physical illness -- which is often the trigger for the loss of a home -- caseworkers also make sure their clients are receiving the medical and mental health care they need.

"It has been clear for decades that shelter alone does not solve the crisis of homelessness," said Stephen Goldsmith, director of the Innovations in American Government Awards at Harvard's Ash Institute, "so Connecticut has taken a holistic approach. The program goes beyond shelter to reconnect individuals with communities, so that tenants also become neighbors." Two thirds of the program's tenants have remained in their new homes for three or more years.

Supportive housing in Connecticut involves five state agencies – the Office of Policy and Management, Department of Social Services, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Department of Economic and Community Development, and Connecticut Housing Finance Authority. The initiative has forged new and productive relationships with the 40-plus community groups that help implement the program locally.

The Innovations in American Government Awards honor city, county, state, tribal and federal government initiatives that are truly creative, measurably effective, meet a significant need, and have the potential to be transferred to other jurisdictions. The 2006 award winners, selected from an initial pool of 1,000 applicants, include two federal, two state, one county, and two municipal programs. The efforts improve conservation, healthcare, housing, education, social services, and law enforcement.

The winners will be formally announced this evening at dinner event in Washington, D.C.